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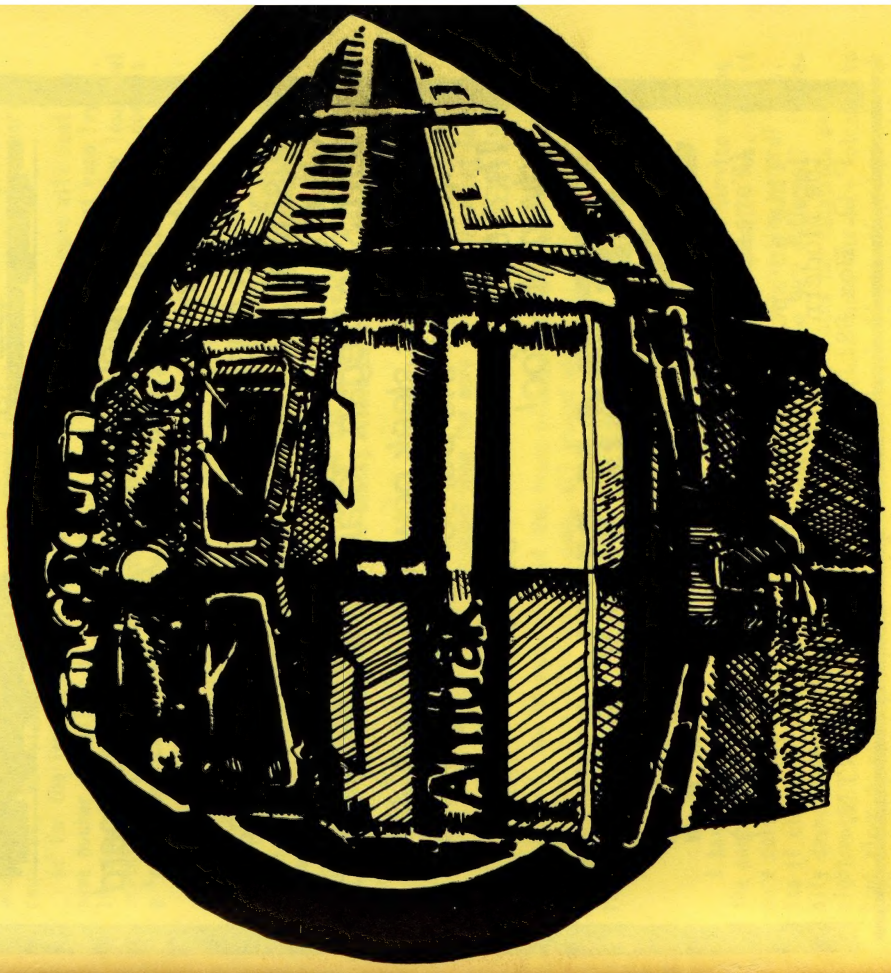

train of the year

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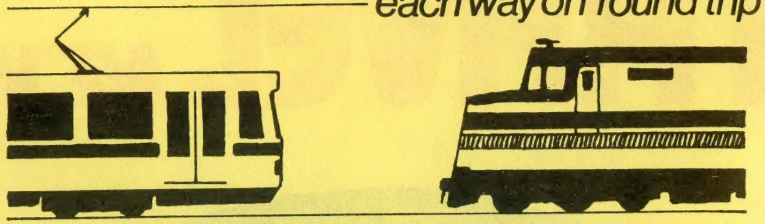

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ON THE COVER

The drawing on our cover of the ubiquitous F40 engine is adapted from an Amtrak (pre-airline) menu of recent vintage.

LETTERS

Amtrak Marketing VP William Norman made a couple of statements at the San Francisco NARP meeting (RTN 232)which deserve comment. He implies that Amtrak has few uses for dome cars because of the commitment to Superliners and because Amtrak "must build new cars that will increase passenger capacity." Domes, as well as other Heritage Fleet equipment, are not in any way inconsistent with Superliners! The very reason for the Hi-level transition car at the front of Superliner consists is to permit the addition of conventional-height cars! Between baggage car and transition car you can add as many domes (and/or flattop coaches) as service requires. How elementary can it be?

As for the importance of increasing capacity, the Heritage cars will seat the same number as Amfleet II cars, given the same seat spacing and rest room layout. The domes even have 24 "overflow" seats upstairs for that surprise heavy load that anything from bad weather to fogged airports can produce. In one sense a dome is a "mini" Superliner already with its partial "double decking".

And how much useful life remains in these cars? As one engineer stated: No one knows the life span of a Budd stainless steel car since none has worn out yet! The COAST STARLIGHT's diners and baggage cars in use right up to the coming of Superliners last year were 43-year old veterans which showed no sign of any serious deterioration. Rebuild a Budd car every 20 years or so and apparently they go on forever.

So let's have our cake and eat it too--we can have the marketing "gold mine" of the Vista-Dome while at the same time adding needed capacity for the least possible cost.

And remember all transportation businesses need seasonal reserve or backup equipment. No firm has ever purchased enough expensive new units to accommodate its peaks. Economic analysis has shown them the more sensible course of keeping and refurbishing the best of their "last generation" equipment which has long ago paid for itself.

Yes indeed, one or more domes at the front of a Superliner train would give travelers that totally unique up, down, all around view that is in another world compared to the flat, two dimensional view from one side of a standard (or Superliner) car.

James E. Cane
San Francisco, California

I began to think of what has happened to Amtrak's long distance service during the past year. It has improved, but why? Was it the new equipment? Yes. Was it more polite and attentive employees? Yes. Was it a better on-time record? Yes. Was it cleaner trains? Yes. But still what seemed to be very different? It finally dawned on me! The middle class are again using trains for vacations and sightseeing. The coaches were filled with middle class types who were noticeable to book sleeping car space... Welcome back, middle class! If you enjoyed your Amtrak trip, write to your President, and Congressman; they might listen to you. After all, you elected them, so let them hear from you. You are articulate enough to be heard, and you are the mainstay of the new order in Washington. So try saving what is left of Amtrak and the commuter railroads. Who knows? They might listen to you.

Thomas P. Higgins
E. Brunswick, New Jersey

train of the year

RTN's annual Train of the Year award for 1981 goes to the CARDINAL.

Each year the editors of RTN select the train that in their opinion has contributed the most to American rail travel thru such means as increased ridership, patron interest or some innovation that promotes better train travel.

While the CARDINAL is not running as we write these lines, it will be running again commencing Jan 8, 1982. The fact that the CARDINAL is being reinstated represents a victory for rail advocates, who got the train back (albeit tri-weekly) in the face of almost insurmountable odds. The victory is a slap in the face to government bureaucrats and such-like who are always eager to cut back on passenger trains regardless of whether their opposition to trains is rational. The CARDINAL was on the yearly hit list of trains to be cut, but under pressure from train supporters got a special status, and its discontinuance in October was temporary pending action from Congress. When the Amtrak budget was at last finalized late in 1981, save-the-CARDINAL legislation was included in it, and Amtrak was prepared to go ahead with a reinstatement of the train as early as possible.

NARP and other passenger train advocates worked long and hard to convince legislators that the train would meet the avoidable-loss criterion in the coming year. Projections were that passenger miles per train mile would have risen 107% from FY 1978 to FY 1982--from 58.9 to 122, and there were other factors that made it obvious--to anyone but anti-train bureaucrats--that the train would receive a lot of new passengers soon: east-west air service at Beckley WV was lost, and the opening of the Hammond IN station would permit connections to the CARDINAL from the heavily-populated area of northwestern Indiana and nearby Illinois points.

Ironically, Senator Bob Packwood of Oregon, who had just received an award at a NARP Directors meeting for his work in saving some Western trains, became the leader of the dump-the-CARDINAL move. Packwood labored down to the wire to keep save-the-CARDINAL language out of the Amtrak bill, but happily he did not prevail.

The photo above, by Jack Ferry, is not of the CARDINAL--rather it is the CRESCENT. But since the CARDINAL is not running now, we show this photo to indicate how the CARDINAL will probably look when it begins running with Heritage Fleet cars on Jan 8.

This is RTN's sixth annual award. Previous awards were: 1976 - LAKE SHORE LIMITED; 1977 - PIONEER; 1978 - SOUTHERN CRESCENT; 1979 - Five hit list trains (FLORIDIAN, HILLTOPPER, LONE STAR, NATIONAL LIMITED and NORTH COAST HIAWATHA); 1980 - Heritage Fleet trains (LAKE SHORE, BROADWAY LIMITED and CRESCENT).

REAGAN SIGNS AMTRAK BUDGET, PREPARES CUTS FOR 1983

President Reagan at last signed the DOT appropriations bill for fiscal year 1982, which gives Amtrak its $735 million and assures its continuance thru Sep of 1982. The signing came on Dec 23.

Meanwhile, the Reagan administration is working on the 1983 budget proposal for the entire federal government, which is expected to be unveiled on Feb 8. Reports say that Reagan wants to cut over $30 billion from the present level of government spending. It is of course not known how much the 1983 Amtrak budget will be in the administration's proposal, but it is generally assumed in Washington that it will be less than the present fiscal year's $735 million. NARP is still asking passenger train advocates to contact their Congressmen and tell them to request $788 million for Amtrak in 1983--the amount that was authorized in a previous bill.

RAIL CANADA

VIA RAIL CANADA'S corporate holiday greeting card for 1981 is shown here, with a full-color scene of a family reunion by VIA train. The line number of the car shown is "1982".

THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT and the cities of Mont Laurier and Parent had asked the Federal Court of Canada to declare Transport Minister Pepin's cutback of 20% of VIA's routes invalid. On Dec 21 the court ruled that the cutback was made legally, even tho it hurt many people. A similar ruling had been made earlier in a Saskatchewan court.

"THE CALGARY CONNECTION" was introduced by VIA on Dec 21--a bus ("Over-The-Road cruiser") between Edmonton and Calgary to enable Edmonton residents to catch the CANADIAN without an overnight stay in Calgary. The bus leaves Edmonton's VIA station at 6:30am, Red Deer at 8:15, and reaches Calgary at 10am. Northbound, the bus leaves Calgary at 9pm and reaches Edmonton at 12:30am. Service got off to a slow start, with only a few people using it the first day. Transport 2000 called it "half a step."

HEAD-ON COLLISION between a CN freight and a VIA train on the Winnipeg-Churchill line occurred near Dauphin, Manitoba on Dec 20. One passenger and three employees were injured when the freight rammed the passenger train that had stopped before entering a siding. Direction of travel was not known.

VIA RAIL CANADA said it was adding a second section to the OCEAN between Halifax and Montreal on Dec 21, 22, 27, 29 and Jan 2 and 4 westbound and Dec 19, 20, 22, 23 and Jan 2 eastbound.

PASSENGERS ARE COMPLAINING that with the reduced service in the West, checked baggage from Winnipeg to Edmonton arrives three hours later than they do, because it is not put on the Dayliner but is routed on two other trains and arrives not only later but also across the river in the CN station. VIA said it hopes to improve schedules with the April timetable change.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

CHICAGO TRANSIT AUTHORITY is getting 300 new cars from the Budd Company, one of which is pictured here. The U.S. DOT and the Illinois DOT are funding purchase of the cars, the total being $133 million. Delivery will be completed by 1984. Budd Company photo.

BART WILL TAKE bids on the proposed new "C" cars (pictured in RTN 221) and has decided also to begin development of an entirely new train control system. Both of these steps are to improve reliability of the system, and were decided upon at BART's board meeting on Dec 17. The multi-million dollar improvement commitment will be the largest expenditure BART has made since the system was completed. BART also decided to try a 20% fare discount plan for off-peak hours in February.

THE SAN JOSE Mercury News editorialized on the Caltrans/SP commute train service on Dec 14, noting that a fare increase is inevitable but suggesting also some improvements to attract riders: spruce up the older cars and the stations, repair parking lots, advertise more, improve coordination between train and bus, set up a Bay Area central transit information line, and put club cars on trains.

SOUTH SHORE RAILROAD in the Chicago area will finally get new equipment. Some 36 new cars from the Sumitomo Corp. of America are to be delivered in 1982, with the first in service by September, and arriving from the builder in February. Cars will be stainless steel with orange and maroon stripes.

THE CHICAGO RTA will consider a proposal in January to cut ICG commuter fares up to 60% for residents of Hyde Park, South Chicago and South Shore to make them comparable to bus fares.

UMTA REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR for New York Alfred A. DelliBovi wrote a letter to the New York Times (Dec 31 issue) criticizing the paper's editorial references to UMTA as being responsible for some of New York's transit woes. UMTA did not "insist on" the heavy "New York doors" on new buses, he said; the NYC Transit Authority itself demanded them. And UMTA was not responsible for a delay in purchasing new subway cars, he said; UMTA approved a $200 million grant on May 12, and any further delay was due to local officials' actions.

MONTH OF DECEMBER saw an increase in crime of New York's transit vehicles, according to preliminary counts of Transit Authority police, and Mayor Koch said on Dec 30 that some steps could be taken to prosecute offenders more effectively, noting that many of them are "repeaters."

MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA bus riders will pay 75¢ per ride fares starting Jan 1, the highest local bus fare in the Bay Area; but it does not apply to Marin County to San Francisco commuters.

WATERBURY, CONNECTICUT CONRAIL ticket office and waiting room were closed in mid-December with little state or public outcry. The train station comprised about one-fourth of the larger station with its famous clock tower, which now houses the city's newspaper offices. Altho weekday traffic is primarily commuter, the central downtown location served both weekday and weekend travelers to New York, or connecting with Amtrak.

AC TRANSIT DISTRICT in the Oakland CA area is facing a $9 million budget deficit in 1982 and is talking about raising fares at least 30%. AC Transit doesn't want to raise fares, but may be pressured by BART and San Francisco Muni to do so.

RIDING AND BIKING THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY

by Ernie Chizinski

In early November I was planning on attending a two-day conference in Salem, Oregon and then visiting friends in Portland. This would require my traveling from my home in Eugene. The conference in Salem was to be held at a motel near an Interstate highway interchange, on the outskirts of town--a convenient location for auto travelers but not for users of intercity public transportation.

Dave Yarbrough, an Amtrak ticket agent in Eugene, explained that as an experiment passengers on the WILLAMETTE VALLEY trains were being allowed to take bicycles aboard the train. This experiment did not apply to the COAST STARLIGHT. The plan allowed passengers the advantage of train/bicycle travel without the problem of disassembly and packaging of the bicycle. The only requirement of Amtrak was that a release be signed by the passenger so Amtrak was not liable for damages or theft of the bicycle. No payment was required beyond the regular fare.

Early on Nov 5 I arrived at the Eugene station by bicycle. At 6:15am train 796, the MOUNT RAINIER, with engine 219 and Superliner coaches 34062 and 34023 was backed from the storage track into the station. Since this "WILLAMETTE VALLEY EXPRESS" runs thru to Seattle, it carries the name and number of the older Portland-Seattle train.

The trainman loaded passengers into the rear coach, which contained the snack bar on the lower level. I walked to the forward coach and gave my release to conductor C.E. Johnson, who then showed me where to place the bike on the lower level of the forward coach. Twelve passengers, one bicycle and one golf bag were loaded, and #796 departed at 6:25am, on time.

Between Eugene and Portland, Amtrak trains operate over the SP's Oregon Division, Brooklyn Subdivision. The line is primarily single track with CTC controlled sidings every seven to 12 miles. Short gaps in the CTC exist at Eugene, Albany, Salem and Portland, but automatic block signals protect movements at these locations. At Portland the line is double track from Willsburg Junction thru Brooklyn Yard and East Portland Tower to Portland Union Station, a distance of six miles. The track is generally in good condition, and the maximum speed for passenger trains is 70mph.

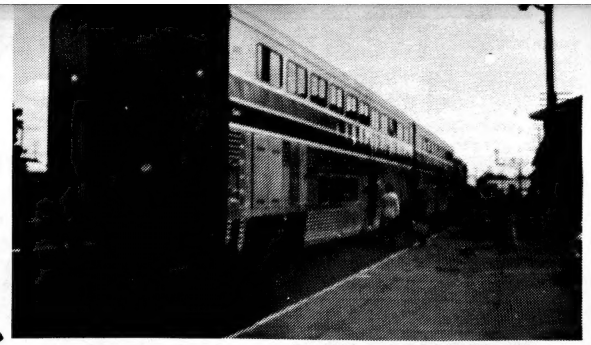
As the train pulled out of the station, conductor Johnson came on the P.A. system and gave some information on the train's scheduled stops, a brief description of the Superliner equipment and features. He then thoughtfully turned down the lights so that sleeping or scenery viewing could be facilitated. I chose the latter as the train picked up speed, moving alongside the SP Eugene yard complex.

The fast running quickly came to an end at mid-point in the yard when a dark signal caused #796 to stop. The conductor stopped taking tickets and walked forward to talk to the engine crew. Within a minute #796 was rolling again at about 15mph. The next signal was visible and showed green, but safety dictated movement at restricted speed until the green signal was passed. After clearing that signal at the south end of Irving siding, the engineer opened the throttle and the speed quickly climbed to 70mph. Eight minutes later we passed a northbound freight tucked away in Swain siding.

In this area, the southern end of the Willamette River Valley, the valley is broad and flat. The primary uses of the land are grass seed, peppermint and other crop farming, as well as sheep raising. As we sped thru the valley, sheep were grazing the fields and the sun silhouetted the eastern ridge of the Cascade Mountain foothills.

After negotiating a curve north of Harrisburg, we entered a tangent stretch of track extending 17 miles. On this stretch a southbound freight was in Shedd siding. The station stop at Albany was efficiently made, and an addition of 12 passengers brought the total load to 24. North of Albany, #796 slowed to 45mph and crossed the Santiam River, moved thru the small town of Jefferson, and accelerated to 70mph. Within a few minutes a herd of llamas came into view on the left side. The animals were lounging in the sun around the out buildings on a farm known as "Llamaland." One regular conductor on the passenger trains never fails to announce this on the P.A. as "the attraction of the day" so that interested passengers can observe these beautiful creatures.

A few minutes later the conductor announced the upcoming Salem stop. A few



The usual two-Superliner car consist of the WILLAMETTE VALLEY is seen in this train at the end of its run in Eugene, Oregon in the fall of 1980. Photo by Gene Hines.

passengers, including myself and bicycle, detrained, and about 15 passengers boarded the train. Coffee was relayed to the 2-man engine crew, and the train left at 7:46am, two minutes late.

My journey was completed with a relaxing 3-mile bike ride over a portion of the Salem bike path system and back streets. I arrived at the conference on time, with a minimum of expense, and more relaxed than many who had driven their autos to the conference.

On the following day I traveled to Portland on train 752. It left Salem at 5:33pm, three minutes late due to a delayed meet at Marion siding with a late-running COAST STARLIGHT. Arrival in Portland was at 6:54pm, 11mins early, which is the usual occurrence. The passenger load was "heavy" with 40 passengers aboard between Salem and Portland.

For my return trip to Eugene I chose the morning WILLAMETTE VALLEY departure on Nov 9. The consist was engine 204, ex-Santa Fe Hi-level coach 39950, and Superliner coach 34013. This consist was unusual, as almost all WILLAMETTE VALLEY trains are one engine and two Superliner coaches. This presented a minor problem --where to place my bike? The lower level of the rear coach was the snack bar, the thought of trying to get the bicycle up to the second level by way of the stairs was not appealing, and conductor Johnson wanted to keep the lower level of the ex-Santa Fe coach clear for passengers using the rest rooms. So with a little twisting and turning I stashed the bike in the unused crew office space in the lower level of the ex-Santa Fe coach.

The rest of the trip was quite smooth, with all station departures on time, and arrival in Eugene was at 9:40am, 15mins early. The passenger load was light with only 15 passengers aboard at all times.

The prospect for the Willamette Valley trains is not good, with plans for the last runs to take place Dec 31, 1981. The reason is discontinuation of state funding. Oregon's current budget crunch will cause the cutting of many state programs and the elimination of other programs.

Ridership never reached the target level of 345 passengers per day. During April and May 1981 a special promotion which allowed a round trip ticket to be purchased for $1 over the one-way fare resulted in ridership of 300 passengers per day, or an average of 75 passengers per train. Current ridership is only 130 per day. A number of reasons can be cited: the complaint of high fares, the gasoline glut, the poor state of the wood-product-based Oregon economy, difficulty in obtaining information from Amtrak's eternally-busy toll-free number, and the slow running time. The COAST STARLIGHT, a longer, heavier train, regularly runs between Portland and Eugene in 2 1/2 hours versus the WILLAMETTE VALLEY's time of three hours. In citing the problems, SP operation of the trains is not one of them; on-time performance was very good, freight train interference was minimal, and the crews SP provided were competent and courteous.

Given a different scenario--tight gas supply, a thriving economy, more frequent service (four trips a day to improve connections and lessen gaps between departure times), one can only speculate how well the service could do.

RTN plans to publish its book "Issues in American Rail Travel", early in 1982. The writing will be completely updated since the original announcement, to cover the new issues of the present administration. If you have already ordered it, it will come to you automatically. For those who have not ordered, look for further information here later.

SPIRITED AWAY ON AN OVERNIGHT TRAIN

by Sylvia and Ted Blishak

December 5: San Jose Amtrak/SP commuter station.

We arrive on the 9:25pm Caltrans/SP commute train. This means we must wait two hours for train 15, the southbound overnight train (later to be named the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA). We were afraid to risk taking the later commute train, which arrives in San Jose at 11:25 pm also--the same instant that the Amtrak train is due!

According to the Amtrak agent on duty, however, it is a reliable connection. "The commuter usually arrives 5mins early. Twice, the trains have arrived simultaneously. If the commuter is late, they're supposed to radio ahead so we can hold #15," he explains. "But that hasn't happened yet." Officially, Amtrak will not guarantee the connection.

Now that the new train has been added to San Jose's trainboard, the Amtrak desk remains open from 5am to 11:30pm.

"Have you increased your staff?" we ask.

"No, we're just spreading ourselves thinner--usually just have one person on shift," he replies.

The commuter rumbles in about two minutes early, and train 15, heralded by strobe lights and chime whistles, arrives right on time on the adjacent platform. The consist includes one baggage car, two Amcoaches, one Amdinette, and two Heritage Fleet sleepers. About 15 passengers board here.

We are greeted by sleeping car porter Art Ryan, wearing a preppy-style red and white Amtrak pullover. We are ticketed for Bedroom B, but is is "bad-ordered" and we are reassigned to Bedroom A, right over the wheels.

Car 2985 "Pine Cavern" has new carpet on the floor and also on the passageway bulkheads. Our room is painted pale green with a purple door. Beds are comfortable, with new pillows, good firm mattresses. We have fluffy terry towels and washcloths in the bathroom. The air conditioner and heater work, and Art tells us that the new head-end power is very dependable.

Somehow we'd gotten the idea that Heritage Fleet equipment had been completely refurbished, but this is not the case. Our fold-down sink is loose and leaks water onto the toilet seat. We notice a lot of sideways lurching as the train whistles off; evidently the trucks need some work.

We walk up to the Amdinette for a snack and a drink. Barman Les Oliver assures us he'll be open until 2am, which we appreciate. He fixes us hot sandwiches--corned beef on an unbuttered, ungarnished French roll, heated in the microwave. We pick up envelopes of mayonnaise and mustard at the counter, which perk it up into the "not bad" category. (Next time, we'll try putting condiments on first and then have it heated, for better flavor.)

Mr. Oliver, who also works the SAN DIEGANS, confides that there is talk of extending this train to Reno--and he thinks if they do, it will be packed. We think so too--there is a big demand from San Jose passengers who want to connect with the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR. Eastbound travelers could get off in Reno, live it up at the casinos next to the station, and a few hours later, continue east on the ZEPHYR.

The booths in the Amdinette are soon filled. The conductor, at one of them, is upgrading some coach passengers to a bedroom (which the station agent's computer terminal had not shown as available when they checked in).

Art Ryan, who formerly served on the EAGLE, tells us he is an RTN reader. He is part of Crew #4, which includes the other sleeping car porter, Wanda Roborson; coach steward Elajahia Shoomake, and Amdinette steward Les Oliver. We are surprised that a crew of four can cope with a train this size, yet service is very good. Art tells us that the first class space on trains 15 and 18 is usually sold out every night but Saturday (which this is). There are accommodations for 44 first class passengers, but only 13 are aboard tonight. (The trains have been running with two sleepers for the past couple of weeks.) Out of 128 coach seats, only 50 are filled. "I think they should have more sleepers and cut down on the coaches," he says. "People like to sleep in beds!"

Before heading for our bedroom we order a cognac nightcap, but learn from Les that most of the bar was sold out between Sacramento and Oakland. He does have some gin and vodka left. We make a mental note to advise our embarking Oakland and San Jose clients to carry their own flasks if they will be wanting a nightcap!

Art asks if we'd like coffee served in our bedroom in the morning, and inquires as to what time we'd like a wakeup call. Good, old-fashioned service is still alive!

Having been spoiled by our recent Superliner trips, we're amazed at how small our bedroom seems. Each click of wheel on rail seems extraordinarily noisy--not at all like the smooth, eerie quiet on a Superliner sleeper. We sleep lightly, awakened by the Cuesta Grade curves. We clatter over some very rough track south of Santa Barbara. At dawn, we're hurtling along thru fog so solid we can see only for a few yards, so miss a view of the ocean.

When we arrive in the Amdinette for breakfast as we go thru the San Fernando Valley, we learn that everything is sold out except one last cup of coffee, which means that we will have to delay breakfast until we arrive at our hotel in downtown Los Angeles. Why is a train that is only half full sold out of food and drink? We are unable to find out--a commissary problem, perhaps. We make a note to advise our clients to pack their own Danish pastry if they are in the habit of eating breakfast!

We arrive at Los Angeles a half-hour ahead of schedule at 8:30am. We are surprised and pleased to find that Budget now has a car rental desk right in the station. Hours are posted as 7:30am to 9pm weekdays, 8am to 5pm Saturdays, and 8am to 4pm Sundays. A sign instructs customers to use the direct phone line to the downtown office for pickup if the station is closed, and indicates that it is okay to drop your car off here after hours.

We taxi to the Bonaventure Hotel, and learn from our driver that the L.A. International Airport has been closed due to fog for the past three mornings. "Amtrak got us here ahead of schedule," we tell him.

"I've heard that Amtrak is awfully expensive, $85 one way for one person in a bedroom," he says. "Why, you can fly here from San Jose for just $36 now!"

"IF the airport is open, that is!" we remind him.

* * *

December 6, L.A. Union Station, 8pm:

The huge waiting room is full of people, with some sitting on the floor or on suitcases. The building is still beautiful, with colorful tiles, potted palms, and oversized armchairs. (The restrooms, however, are in shockingly bad repair.)

We find the trainboard, where train 18 is listed next to a blank space where the name would be. A frosted plastic panel over our boarding gate labels our train SPECIAL. When we walk down the boarding tunnel, a hand-lettered cardboard sign points to "Train 18." This train needs a name!

We locate our car, line no. 1831. No porter greets us at the steps as we board, along with about 35 other passengers, and locate Bedroom D. We have heard stories about duplicate bookings on this train, and we wonder if we'll have to defend our rights to our room, but we don't have any problems. We depart on time at 8:25pm. This is a different car than we rode in last night, with a different train crew. Our room is newly carpeted and contains a "built-in" armchair with orange floral upholstery from Amtrak's early days. An unattached chair, with wooden arms and a chrome base, is covered in worn blue and yellow cloth. Overhead lighting is dismal. We are reminded that the corridors in old sleepers are only wide enough for one-way traffic as passengers must back into our doorway to let others pass.

We arrive at Glendale station at 8:42pm, one minute early, and pick up another 40 passengers. We are enjoying the sound of our melodic whistle, quite audible from our car. The ride is less noisy than last night, and we notice that this car sways, rather than lurching like last night's did.

First one, than another porter rushes past in the corridor, but neither stops. Our call button evidently doesn't work. When one of the porters saunters by with a drink in his hand (which he is, by the way, drinking), we call out the door to him. He returns after five minutes or so and checks our names off his list. We ask him to make up our beds.

Meanwhile, we go to the Amdinette for a cognac. All booths are taken, so we sit in the coach end of the car. We decide to try the popcorn, which is freshly popped in the microwave. It is hot and delicious. The high-backed Amfleet seats are very comfortable, and the car is smoother and quieter-riding than our sleeper.

A 10-year-old blonde girl, standing in line for a Coke, asks an older passenger, "Is this your first train ride, too?" Soon both are smiling and chatting about their impressions of Amtrak. This reminds me of a question several people have asked us when we told them about this trip: "Why spend all that time on a train when PSA can get you there in an hour?" Robert Louis Stevenson explained his views on travel this way: "For my part, I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move."

The point of our trip was not to BE in Los Angeles, but to enjoy the train ride! This may be difficult for the jet-set mentality to comprehend--until the jet enthusiast actually experiences a train ride for himself (and more are doing so all the time). The train passenger finds there is no tension, no anxiety, no parking hassles

It was just barely light enough for photography at 7:20am on the last day of 1981 when the northbound SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA whisked thru Berkeley CA at top speed, like a ghost in the gray morning. RTN's camera, set at 1/60th at f4 with Tri-X film, just managed to catch enough of the train's features to identify two F40 engines, baggage car, two Heritage sleepers, Amdinette and four Amcoaches.

at an airport. No standing in lines for checked baggage (you can carry your two suitcases on board on Amtrak). No standing in another line for boarding passes. No being crammed into a seat designed to fit a child of twelve. No safety belts to fasten, no safety drill, no "Please remain seated until..."

Instead, you relax. You enjoy the ambiance of the train. You sit awhile, then you walk around; you go to bed. You order food and drink when YOU are ready for it. You go with the rhythm of the rails--you think thoughts you don't usually think. You get acquainted with parts of yourself you are usually too rushed to notice.

At 9:50pm we return to Bedroom D. Only the lower bed is made up. Ted tracks down the porter and asks him to make the upper bunk, too. It is stored right up beneath the ceiling.

"Ain't never seen one like THIS before," he admits. While Ted twists the key, the porter pulls with all his might, and finally the bunk rolls down into position. "They don't use this kind of hard steel on the Superliners," the porter says. "Those Superliners are sure nice, but they're not built to last like these were." This brings to mind the unsettling possibility that Heritage Fleet might outlast Superliner!

Tonight we sleep more soundly, nodding off after Santa Barbara and awakening at the Salinas stop. We arrive in San Jose one-half hour late at 6:12am, giving us a one-minute connection with the 6:13 commuter across the platform, which drops us off two blocks from our travel agency in Menlo Park.

As we open up, a customer comes in to buy a ticket on train 18.

"We just came in on it this morning," we say.

"You mean you spent last night on the train?" she asks. "You don't LOOK as if you did!"

SAVING THE MIXED TRAINS OF WISCONSIN FROM EXTINCTION

by Bill Francik

A curious outcome of the steady decline of America's once extensive intercity rail passenger network was the scattered revival of the mixed train (a service that carries both freight and passengers on the same train), a revival that occurred as highway competition practically vanquished most intercity passenger trains, and during a time when conventional logic would have precluded the continuation, much less rebirth, of mixed-train service.

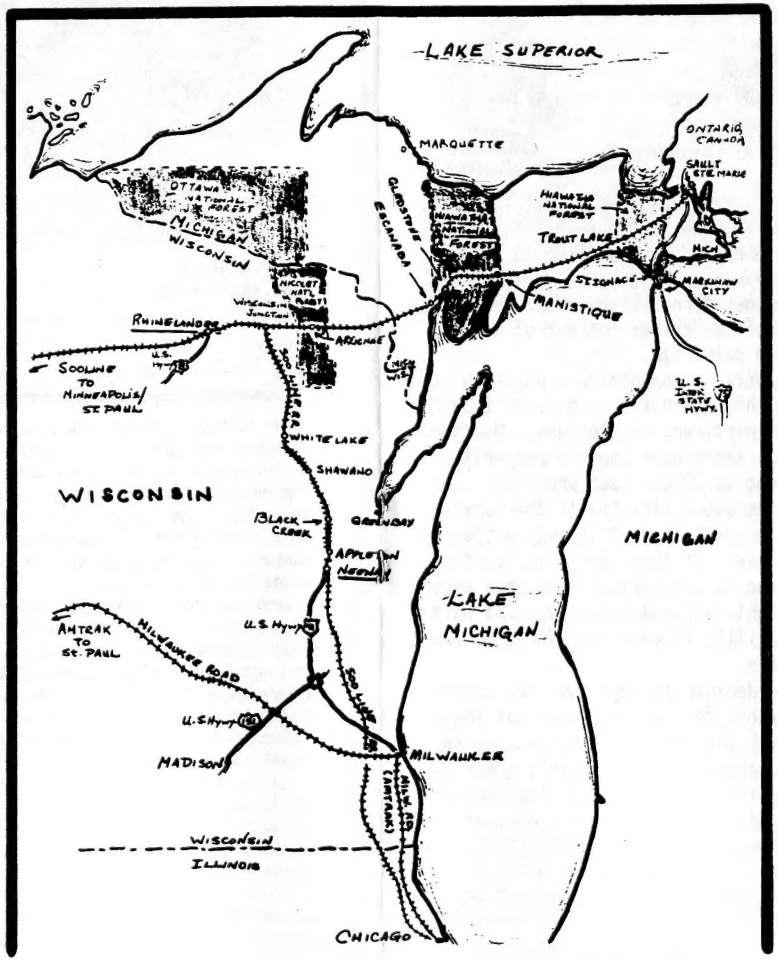
This revival took place primarily because of particular agreements that many railroads were subject to obeying. These agreements were oftentimes the result of "horse trading" between the railroad and the applicable regulatory agency which oversaw the public's interest vis-a-vis a railroad's petition to discontinue a line's last passenger train: if the regulator would permit the railroad to discontinue a line's unprofitable passenger trains, the railroad would be required to provide passenger service on its freight trains, and thus mixed trains were sometimes reborn.

There were also some instances wherein railroads were granted their charters to act as common carriers by agreeing to provide passenger service on their lines in perpetuity, as long as the lines so covered were in fact being operated. Governments would require railroads to enter into such agreements in return for publicly ceded lands to the carriers, for some type of public investment in the building or operation of the railways, or as compensation to the public for the inconvenience due to the railroads.

Obviously, railroad companies agreed to such provisions during the 19th Century because no one could foresee the rise of competing, and sometimes superior, transportation technologies. As a result of these commitments and many local tax disincentives enacted to prevent the cessation of passenger service, railroads oftentimes had few alternatives when they decided to discontinue a line's last passenger trains. Mixed trains allowed the carrier to meet the letter of the law while, at the same time, relieving the company of the cost of running unprofitable passenger trains.

It was for these reasons that many railroads operated mixed trains right up until the start of the Amtrak system. For those railroads which had discontinued all their passenger trains before Amtrak took over the nation's remaining passenger traffic, there was no good reason to join the federally financed rail network. Yet opting out of the Amtrak system still did not abrogate existing local agreements which "persuaded" a particular railroad to provide some type of passenger service. It is for this reason that a small number of railroads still operate mixed trains even today. Those railroads which still run mixed trains will usually deny any knowledge of these forgotten offspring, fearing that admission of the service's existence might fuel public demand. Railroad management hopes that over time and with public disuse, the overseeing governmental commission will eventually permit the discontinuance of this last "passenger nuisance."

It is arguable whether mixed trains constitute a passenger service which public interest groups should work to retain. Yet it must be pointed out that mixed-train services cost the operating railroad practically nothing to run in return for the right to provide freight service, a right originally granted at some public expense, however long ago. Mixed trains can provide a valuable transportation alternative where other alternatives are limited or do not exist, where geographic and climatic conditions warrant rail service, and at small cost to both the railway and the traveler. Given that passengers are usually accommodated by an extra seat or two within the mixed train's caboose, and since the branch line will probably continue to be served by a local freight whether or not the railroad continues to receive passengers, there is little if any cost attributable to passenger service aboard a mixed train. Clearly, mixed trains are low-cost services provided for the larger public's welfare.



The issue at hand is the threat facing continued mixed-train service to Northeast Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (the latter is known to its inhabitants and local people as the "UP"). Operated by the Soo Line Railroad, the mixed trains run seven days a week, 52 weeks a year. Serving the remote woodlands of the Upper Midwest, the Soo's mixed trains provide freight and, theoretically, passenger transportation to an economically depressed region of the country.

According to Bob Ballou, President of the Wisconsin Association of Railroad Passengers (WisARP), the Soo Line has done much to discourage use of the passenger side of their mixed-train service; rail agents sometimes refuse to sell tickets to prospective passengers, insisting that tickets be purchased in Minneapolis, at the Soo Line's corporate headquarters. The Soo is now trying to discontinue the service, and WisARP intends to fight for whatever little passenger service still exists within Wisconsin, including these threatened mixed trains. Jim Hill, an attorney from Appleton WI, is representing WisARP and the general public in the case.

Jim Hill became involved in the fight to save the service after the Soo Line unilaterally dropped its mixed-train service when it

stopped selling tickets to prospective passengers in early October. Upon learning of the Soo's action, Hill promptly informed the ICC and the Wisconsin Transportation Commission (WTC) that the railroad had violated applicable regulations when it discontinued the service unilaterally. He noted that any service cuts would require a 30-day notice of discontinuance to be posted before any such action, and the scheduling of public hearings by the WTC upon receiving the railroad's petition of discontinuance. (It is WisARP's contention that the Soo discontinued the passenger side of its mixed-train service without posting the required 30-day notice of service cessation simply because the railroad did not want to call attention to its efforts.)

Hill then informed the Soo's legal department of their violation of the regulatory requirements. A Soo attorney verified their legal faux pas in a conversation with Hill the following day. Shortly thereafter, the WTC notified the Soo Line that it must reinstate the mixed-train service before any commission decision could be made on the petition of discontinuance.

After several weeks of freight service without passenger service, the Soo resumed mixed-train service on Oct 25. At the same time, the road posted notices of discontinuance. In so doing, the Soo Line so much as admitted that it had violated state and federal regulations, but in its public statements it maintained that it saw no reason to continue passenger service--it was "dangerous" to have people riding in cabooses, and no one used the service "except railfans and a few enterprising journalists."

From Coast to Coast
The "SOO" LINE offers
modern trains entering nearly every large northern city of interest and passing through the grandest scenic display in America

On this latter point, Bob Ballou reports that several newspaper articles featured the Soo Line's little-known mixed trains during the past summer. There is speculation that the resultant publicity may have caused the railroad to fear that the service might become popular with hikers, campers and residents destined for the communities and northern pine forests of Northeastern Wisconsin and UP Michigan, and that it had better discontinue the service before "things got out of hand"--i.e., before public support for the service could galvanize.

WisARP has been trying to obtain information vital to preparing a position paper in defense of the mixed-train service. So far, this has not been an easy task due to the railroad's refusal to release information pertinent to the case. However, from what WisARP has been able to learn thus far, there have been no personal injuries attributable to the mixed service as long as it has been provided. Furthermore, there appear to be no insurance costs assessed strictly to the service. The company has no insurance coverage for train operations, but it sets aside funds within its operating budget for such purposes. In this way it is "self-insured" so that no particular train operation can be assessed an insurance cost. This practice is fairly standard within the freight railroad industry. The bottom line is that the mixed trains cost the Soo Line little if anything over and above what a "pure" local freight train costs to operate.

WisARP maintains that mixed-train passenger ridership is kept low for reasons that are all too familiar to rail service advocates: few people know about the service's existence, and those who do are met with the railroad's resistance to accept passengers. (Oftentimes prospective passengers are sent on wild goose chases trying to find a Soo Line agent who will sell them tickets.) The Wisconsin affiliate of NARP also maintains that the Soo's mixed service can and does provide a transportation function which is valuable to the remote areas of Northeast Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and it is a service which the state should promote and support. WisARP states that while mixed-train service may not be appropriate for more developed areas of the country, the Soo's present service is

(continued on page 19)

Mixed Train of Thoughts

A SUPPLEMENTARY SCHEDULE is being published by Amtrak in January because of schedule changes effective in early January. As of Dec 31 the folder was not back from the printer, but a printer's proof was available, and it listed the following items:

The CARDINAL will begin running again on Jan 8 on a tri-weekly basis, leaving end points New York and Chicago on Sunday, Wednesday and Friday. Previously the train ran only to Washington, but now it is extended by means of a thru sleeper to New York. The sleeping car will run from New York's Penn Station on corridor train 185, leaving there at 4pm, with Chicago arrival at 5:50pm the next day. Effective Feb 7 the sleeper will operate on corridor train 187, which leaves New York at 5pm, thus giving an hour's faster trip to Chicago. Eastbound the train leaves Chicago at 9:10am beginning Jan 8, reaching New York at 12:37pm the next day. On Feb 7 it will start leaving Chicago at 9:10am but arriving New York at 12:11pm, 26 minutes faster due to a faster running time in the Corridor. The train will use all Heritage Fleet equipment instead of a mixture of Amfleet and Heritage. The consist will be: F40 locomotive, 50-foot baggage car, three 44-seat coaches of the 4600-series, cafeteria-lounge car, two coaches, and 10/6 thru sleeper. Amtrak said that food service will be similar to that provided in the cafeteria-lounge of the CAPITOL LIMITED.

The year-round daily operation of the EMPIRE BUILDER is announced.

The discontinuance of the WILLAMETTE VALLEY and one MOUNT RAINIER train effective after Dec 31 is shown.

The CAPITOL LIMITED has some time changes as of Jan 8. The train will run 25mins faster westbound, leaving Washington at 3:55pm instead of 3:20; arriving Harpers Ferry at 5pm instead of 4:30; Martinsburg 5:20 instead of 4:50; and Pittsburgh at 11:40pm instead of 11:30. The train then still leaves Pittsburgh at 12:27am as part of the BROADWAY LIMITED. The time at McKeesport PA is shown--10:40pm, with the note "Service to commence on a date to be announced." Amtrak said that the McKeesport station is completed, but Amtrak is negotiating with the Port Authority for use of the station, which should be decided at the Authority's next board meeting in Feb.

The FORT PITT westbound will leave all points an hour earlier (from Altoona at 6am instead of 7:00), in order to become a kind of commuter train. There is no schedule eastbound. This is effective Jan 8.

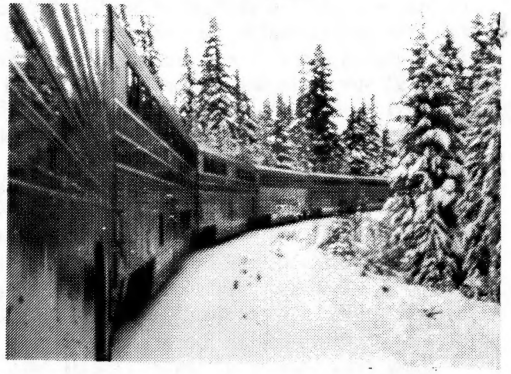
The SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA has a minor schedule change Jan 8: northbound train 18 will arrive San Luis Obispo at 1:05am instead of 1:20, and leave at 1:13 instead of 1:28; will arrive Salinas at 3:57am instead of 4:12; will arrive and leave San Jose at 5:31am and 5:35 instead of 5:41 and 5:45. The rest of the schedule is unchanged. Amtrak said that the train had been reaching San Luis early and waiting for time.

The supplementary schedule is dated Jan 1 thru Apr 24, and is expected to be distributed nationwide by about Jan 17.....

★ ★ ★

AMTRAK'S ARROW COMPUTER is still having its difficulties. At the end of the year an Amtrak spokesman said "We are not out of the dark yet; however, progress has been steady, tho slow. We survived the holiday rush and came out of it, if not smelling like a rose, in reasonably good fashion. We expect that once the holiday rush is over, the wrinkles in the system that are now being ironed out will be ironed out all that much more quickly, and that by mid-January we should be able to give some pretty good statistics on how it has worked." Amtrak acknowledged that in mid-December there was some "inordinate down time." (Another source said that the computer was down all day on Dec 16 and most of the 17th.)

Amtrak said that it still has days of 35% lost calls, but that more frequently it is able to get below 20% lost. Amtrak said that an outside computer specialist had been hired, and observed that Amtrak had done "amazingly well" considering the constraints under which the reservations computer was put on line--particularly the constraint that Amtrak had to "throw a switch at midnight one night" and have the computer go on nationwide without any extensive test program. There was some prior testing, however--the Jacksonville FL RSL was set up a couple of months before the startup and some tests were done there, but not the broad-scale tests of a system entirely new in both hardware and software that is normal in such a vast application. Why didn't Amtrak run an extensive test program before? Amtrak answered that it didn't have time--the old ARTS system had mechanical difficulties and had reached its capacity by early summer of 1981.....



THE COAST STARLIGHT had a New Year's detour (not to be confused with the Thanksgiving detour reported on last issue) after heavy rain and snow in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon washed out 240 feet of SP roadbed at milepost 558 near Oakridge, between Eugene and Chemult. The washout left the rails hanging without support, like a suspension bridge. The washout occurred the evening of Dec 29, after northbound train 14 of the 28th had passed, but before train 11 of the 29th was due thru. Train 11 had reached Eugene before the need for a detour was known, and it was returned to Portland and then detoured over the UP and BN between Portland and Chemult via Bend, Oregon (the route taken by the excursion train thru the Deschutes River Canyon reported on in RTN 232). Train 11 was eventually 15 hours and 26 minutes late reaching Martinez the next day, and at Davis it officially became train 15, the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA, and passengers from Sacramento were bused to it. This was done because the equipment of train 18, the northbound SPIRIT, had been terminated at Oakland that morning (and passengers for north of Oakland bused on) in order to be turned and provide a nearly on-time STARLIGHT departure from Oakland tc L.A. to protect about 300 passengers scheduled to leave from Bay Area points on the 30th. That equipment was sent south without the sleepers. Northbound #14 was 4hrs late into Portland on Dec 30, after taking the detour, and that was the length of delay that Amtrak was expecting. On Dec 31 Amtrak was estimating that the track would be reopened on Jan 3 or 4. The photo above shows scenery in the general area of the washout, and was taken by Peter Bretz on his detour trip described last issue.....

THE DELAND, FLORIDA station belonging to SCL that Amtrak uses was hit by an arson's attack at 2am on Dec 31. An arson or arsons broke into the Amtrak Express office, rummaged thru the express packages, and probably stole some, and then set fire to the contents of the room. Local firemen quickly doused the flames, but there was extensive damage to the packages and other contents of the express room and the portion of the building that holds it. There was only smoke damage to the Amtrak ticket office and waiting room, and they continued in use.....

FIRST AMTRAK II lounge car was formally accepted by Amtrak on Dec 28, and it was being sent to Washington Union Station Dec 31 for inspection by Amtrak officials. Amtrak said the car must undergo shakedown runs before a complete Amfleet II consist would be assigned to the SILVER STAR, the first train to get the new cars as part of its regularly-assigned consists. The new cars have been run in revenue service on the SILVER STAR, however, and the first date they were noted was Dec 13 on train 81 out of Washington, and then back on train 82 the next day. The consist of train 82 at Richmond VA on Dec 16 was: (engines unknown), cars 1630, 2458 "Pine Leaf", 2460, Amfleet II coaches 25008 & 25009, Heritage coaches 4740, 4617, 4009, 4647, cafe-lounge car no. unknown, diner 8519, coach 4645, Amfleet II coaches 25006, 25007 & 25004, and sleeper 2455. On Dec 17 the train left Washington with the same Amfleet II cars as above plus #25000, 25001, and 25002. The other three consists of the SILVER STAR are still using steam-heated equipment. A Connecticut reader who rode the train whose consist is given above said he was very pleased with the new cars--the ride was good, and the larger windows made the cars much more pleasant. Amtrak said that the cars were running primarily as training cars for the maintenance bases.....

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SPECIAL WINTER FARES in the East are being announced by Amtrak for the period Jan 10 thru Apr 1. These cover trains from the EAGLE eastward, except the MONTREALER and intra-NE Corridor runs. A return ticket can be purchased for $10 if the one-way fare is $45 or more, including tickets that are later upgraded to sleeper class (but the sleeper space is not discounted). There will be a limited number of these discounted tickets sold, Amtrak said, but its marketing department feels that most travelers seeking the discount tickets will be accommodated. The availability of the discounts is very limited in February on trips to New Orleans for the Mardi Gras, and to Florida during the Washington Birthday holiday. Amtrak said that Western train fares are not being discounted because their ridership is "pretty strong most of the time".....

SPEAKING OF RIDERSHIP, some more comments on the ridership data on page 22: Amtrak said that its official position on the dropoff of ridership is that it is caused by the recession--a general downturn in both personal and business travel. (Interestingly, gasoline sales were reportedly up in August because of the gas glut and lower prices at the pump.) And here is a very interesting point: Amtrak said that in spite of the fairly large dropoff of ridership in August, revenues and "yield" were up on all segments of the Amtrak system because of higher fares. Ridership figures have been slow coming out of Amtrak recently because the corporation ironically saved up some months of data in the waning days of the ARTS system in order to program them into the Arrow system, and then discovered that there was so much down time on it that fewer in-house computations could be done.....

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SOME SEVERE STORMS have been hitting various parts of the nation this winter. New England got a heavy snow and ice storm on Dec 6, the worst storm for early winter since Dec 5, 1926. In that storm, Logan Airport in Boston, the Newark airport and the two New York airports were closed. At one point American Airlines had boarded 100 passengers on a plane at Newark and then found it could not take off. The airline called Amtrak, which was happy to accommodate the would-be fliers. They were bused to the Amtrak station and taken by train to Washington. Amtrak said the storm created a "tremendous surge" in NE Corridor patronage. The corporation said that the surge was handled well, with only a few trains running late. "The trains did a wonderful job of moving people on time" noted an Amtrak spokesman.....

WASHINGTON UNION STATION is to get some further improvements under legislation signed by the President on Dec 29. The bill assures that the roof work will be completed, and the parking garage. Other improvements will await the outcome of DOT studies and the agreement of various parties. NARP commented that it hopes that the work will included re-laying the track thru the "Amshack" to the old station. Greyhound and Trailways are ready to move to new locations near Washington Union Station, leaving their old locations on New York Avenue. Greyhound will locate north of Union Station on Eighth Street, and Trailways is expected to announced plans soon to purchase property adjacent to Amtrak and Greyhound.....

CITY OF CHICAGO has proposed relocating the Greyhound Bus Terminal to a site adjacent to Union Station. NARP applauded the move in a Dec 12 press release, and called on the city to "go all the way and create a complete intermodal transportation center on the near west side, by including Trailways and the CTA rapid rail transit system in the project." In a Dec 3 letter to Chicago Planning Commissioner Martin Murphy, NARP Assistant Director Barry Williams urged the city to "include Trailways in its plans for a new bus terminal on the block bounded by Canal, Clinton, Jackson and Van Buren" and to "link Union Station and the new bus terminal to the Clinton Street CTA Subway station, by means of an underground pedestrian tunnel".....

AIR FARE WAR is on for the New York-Florida business, giving Amtrak stiffer competition. At the close of December, the one-way fare was down to as low as $107 on Air Florida, with the bigger airlines following suit.....

SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION Drew Lewis is quoted in Nation's Business magazine (Dec issue) in an anti-Amtrak diatribe. He said that Amtrak must lose its cross-country routes and be reduced to only densely populated corridors such as Boston to Washington and San Francisco to Los Angeles. He said that Amtrak passengers must pay 50% of the costs of the system, and stated that "It's a myth that we save energy by keeping Amtrak operating as extensively as it does now, and it's a myth that many Americans are nostalgic about passenger trains." His remarks were clearly hostile toward rail. Where does he view transportation as going in the next two decades? He foresees 50% more passenger planes, directed by a highly automated traffic control system. He sees the Interstate Highway system completed and existing highways maintained, with "hundreds of new bridges" built and older ones modernized. He reportedly told another East Coast reporter that Amtrak would be reduced to 20 corridors and two long distance routes.....

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END OF DECEMBER saw a number of important train articles appearing in the press. Berton Roueché is now the New Yorker's resident rail enthusiast. His earlier articles in that magazine have been reviewed here. Now in the Dec 28 issue he has written his best one yet--"Trans Europ Nuit", a story of his first overnight train trip in Europe, from Copenhagen to Paris, including crossing the Baltic Sea with the train on a ferry. In the course of his trip, his sleeper almost got routed to the wrong destination. The New York Times travel section of Dec 27 featured a two-page spread on a coast-to-coast Amtrak trip, by Robert D. Hershey Jr., plus a giant photo on half of the front page of the section showing the EMPIRE BUILDER crossing Glacier National Park. Hershey, his wife and four kids took the BROADWAY from New York, had a stopover in Chicago, and took the BUILDER to Spokane. They all seemed to enjoy the trip, but the main hassle was feeding everybody under today's restricted dining conditions. The article includes a half-page guide for the traveler to east-west routes (including the Rio Grande and the CANADIAN). The Chicago Tribune on Dec 27 & 28 published a two-part series by Transportation Editor David Young on Amtrak--a capsule history of the corporation and what uncertain future it faces--an interesting, fact-packed article. One quotation from Clark Tyler that concludes the article: "I don't see pulling back on the route structure any more than we already have. The real question is where growth will occur". The airline-style food in an accompanying photo looks attractive.....

THE ARIZONA DEPARTMENT of Transportation had scheduled hearings on rail passenger service in the state on Dec 16 and 17 in Phoenix and Yuma.....

THE SOUTHWEST LIMITED at Kansas City on Dec 19 (train 4, eastbound) was delayed near Marceline MO due to rail pulling apart in zero temperatures, and it arrived Ft. Madison about 4 hours late.....

DAILY OPERATION OF the EMPIRE BUILDER year-round will substantially improve the train's revenue/cost ratio, bringing it to 62%, said Amtrak in announcing the

change on Dec 18. It will also increase the passenger miles generated per dollar of federal subsidy by 12% and decrease the avoidable loss per passenger mile by 15%, Amtrak said.....

AMTRAK'S PACKAGE EXPRESS is now being marketed more aggressively to the general public. Packages sent by Amtrak can weigh up to 75 pounds. A 25lb package from New York to Chicago costs only $13.25 for next-day service. Check with your local Amtrak station or sales office about the service.....

LAKE MICHIGAN FERRY service, run by the Chessie System, has a new fall-winter-spring timetable out. The service runs between Ludington MI and Manitowoc and Kewaunee WI on Tuesday thru Saturday (except holidays). Winter weather on the lake often requires operation to change, and passengers should call Ludington (616-843-2521) or Manitowoc (414-684-3325) at the last minute to confirm schedules. The railroad has a continuous roundtrip package for auto-less travelers for $21.20 including one meal.....

GRAND TRUNK WESTERN should raise its speed limit for Amtrak trains to 79mph between Battle Creek and Port Huron, Amtrak believes, and hearings will be held on its petition on Feb 3-5 at the U.S. Court of Claims in Washington DC.....

THE BUSIEST DAY of the year for Amtrak, the Sunday after Thanksgiving Day, saw traffic down 2000 passengers in Chicago, and a lot of the dropoff was blamed on the foulups of Amtrak's new Arrow computer reservations system.....

News in this issue is updated thru Dec 31, 1981.

Best wishes for a very happy new year from the staff of RTN.

BOOKS

● Thomas Cook Ltd, publishers of the famous Continental Timetable has just issued a booklet entitled "European Sleeping Cars 1982". The 12-page booklet, 6¼x9½, gives photographs, diagrams and descriptions of each type of European sleeping car in general use. These cars are operated by the national railway that owns them or by the European Sleeping Car Pool (or Pool-TEN, where TEN stands for Trans Europe Night). North American readers can purchase it and other Cook publications from Forsyth Travel Library, PO Box 2975, Shawnee Mission KS 66201. Price is $1.95 U.S. funds (plus $2 postage to Canada).

● Chicago Transit Authority has a limited number of 1982 calendars available by mail for $2 each. Calendar has 17 duotone photos of Chicago scenes with transit vehicles. Write: CTA Calendar, Box 3555, Chicago IL 60654.

SOO LINE

(continued from page 14)

appropriate for the regions it serves. WisARP would like to see some moderate improvements to the service such as established agent locations and hours for easier ticket purchasing, and public information about train schedules.

The Soo Line's service consists of the following trains:

A daily morning departure out of Neenah WI northbound, train 912, runs thru to Sault Ste. Marie and arrives in the Sault in the early evening. Six days a week (except Sunday) train 910 departs Rhinelander WI to make connections with #912 at Argonne WI.

A daily morning departure from Sault Ste. Marie southbound, train 911, runs

thru to Neenah and arrives at the south end of its run in the early evening. Six days a week (except Sunday) train 909 departs Argonne, after waiting for the connection from #911, and arrives in Rhinelander in the early evening.

Arrival and departure times vary from day to day. Train information can be obtained from the Soo Line agents listed below:

Argonne WI, 715-649-3314 Mon-Fri; Gladstone MI, 906-428-3454 Mon-Fri or 906-428-2111 for train operator on duty 24 hrs/day 7 days/week; Soo Line corporate headquarters Minneapolis, 612-332-1261--recommend call in advance for ticket information; Neenah WI, 414-722-4291 Mon-Fri, operator on duty 24 hrs/day 7 days/week; Rhinelander WI, 715-362-6157 Mon-Fri; Sault Ste. Marie MI, 906-632-2243 Mon-Fri.

Public testimony will be heard on the railroad's petition to discontinue the trains on Thurs., Jan 14 at 10am at the University ofWisconsin's Fox Valley Campus, Center Gallery at Minasha WI, at 1478 Midway Road (reachable by Greyhound from Chicago via Madison).

A decision by the WTC is expected approximately a month after the hearings. The WTC is accepting mailed statements of support for the service. It would be helpful for those out of state to write, to: Wisconsin Transportation Commission, PO Box 7957, Madison WI 53707. The WTC's number is 608-266-2321.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"The train is like opera. It loses money but we need it."

--Train rider Jeannine Gauthier quoted in Montreal Gazette Nov 14.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Amtrak--Scene One: Union Station.

Train number 60 huffs and gushes, clouding the platform in puffs of steam: the 5:10p.m. Montrealer, fresh from Miami, has all aboard."

--H. Bradford Fish in Washington Post, Dec 4.

(After a lengthy detour and a quick switch to the SILVER STAR's equipment.)

"The Inter-American route begins at Little Rock, Ark., and runs through Arkansas and Texas, to Laredo, Tex. The connecting routes include those going east to Savannah, and those going north to Chicago."

--Daily Traffic World, December date unknown.

(Those narrow lines are state boundaries, not rail routes.)

CARS & CONSISTS

*SOUTHWEST LIMITED, train 4, Kansas City Dec 18: engines ATSF 4626 (SD), Atk 290 & 292 (F40s); cars 1132, 1162, Hi-level 39937, Superliner 31028, Hi-level 39940, Superliner 34024, Hi-levels 39960, 39971, Superliners 38002, 32037, 32040. Same, Dec 25: engines 291, 265, 239 (F40s); cars 1237, Hi-level 39938, Superliner 31012, Hi-level 39947, Superliner 34067, Hi-level 39957, Superliner lounge 33013, diners 38028 & 38012, Hi-levels 39960, 39958, 39945, 39950, Superliner sleepers 32058 & 32050.

*LAKE SHORE LIMITED, train 48, Utica Dec 19: engines 343, 342 (F40s); cars 1615, 2051, 2441 "Pacific Cove", 2461 "Silver Crag", 4600, 4616, 4610, 4001, 3101, 8501, 4605, 4604, 21848, 2435 "Pacific Meadow", 21263, 1171 "Silver Coyote".

*SILVER STAR, train 81, St. Petersburg Dec 10: engine 383 (F40); cars 3126, 4646, 4645, 4020, 2455 "Elm Grove". Same, train 82: engine 611 (SDP); cars 3343, 5013 "Silver Sword", 5457, 5417, 2784 "Seminole County".

*COAST STARLIGHT, train 14, Oakland Nov 20: engines 239, 241 (F40s); cars 1138, Hi-level 39916, Superliners 31033, 34052, 34078, 34070, 33020, 38014, 32065, 32041 (detoured thru Feather River Canyon; had extra coach added at L.A. to handle large crowd traveling Klamath Falls-Eugene for football game, but due to delay the group never rode).

*Amtrak cars at New Orleans yards and station on Sep 28: 600, 1163, 1164, 1211, 1261, 1401, 2152, 2302, 2312, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2361, 2362, 2365, 2367, 2369, 2371, 2443, 2556, 2772, 2884, 2890, 2900, 2911, 2923, 3202, 3212, 3213, 3375, 3382, 3391, 3392, 3393, 3394, 3395, 4621, 4622, 4632, 4728, 4730, 4739, 6020, 8401, 3390, 21849, 21862, 21864, 21870, 21885, 28305, 28306, domes 9321, 9331, 9811, 9813, 9814.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Jan 9: "Last" Great Trolley Trip: San Francisco Muni excursion incl PCC 1038 (a car to be preserved) & "Iron Monster" 178. 10am-4pm. Amtrak space avail from L.A. $25 (excur. only). Orange Empire Rwy Museum, Box 548, Perris CA 92370; 862-5518.

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AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES

AUGUST 1981 FIGURES--SECOND COLUMN IS % INCREASE/(DECREASE) OVER 1980

METROLINERS	96,410	(23.4)
NORTHEAST CORRIDOR CONVENTIONAL	481,230	(26.4)
PHIL-NEW HAVEN-SPRINGFIELD	21,683	(4.0)
NEW YORK-PHILADELPHIA	159,078	(22.7)
PHILADELPHIA-HARRISBURG	65,778	(15.0)
NEW YORK-HARRISBURG	23,064	(23.2)
TOTAL NORTHEAST CORRIDOR	847,243	(24.1)
NEW YORK-NIAGARA FALLS	77,681	3.6
CHICAGO-ST.LOUIS	27,334	(13.4)
CHICAGO-MILWAUKEE	25,141	(10.5)
CHICAGO-DETROIT/TOLEDO	42,129	(10.3)
CHICAGO-CARBONDALE	17,765	9.2
CHICAGO-QUINCY	6,797	(20.1)
LOS ANGELES-SAN DIEGO	128,715	(13.9)
SEATTLE-EUGENE	8,195	(12.9)
VANCOUVER-SEATTLE	10,042	8.9
WASHINGTON-CINCINNATI	10,250	(19.3)
WASHINGTON-MARTINSBURG	19,908	(4.6)
OAKLAND-BAKERSFIELD	23,416	32.0
NEW YORK-MONTREAL	13,658	36.6
CHICAGO-PORT HURON	11,189	(11.5)
CHICAGO-DUBUQUE	4,889	11.2
CHICAGO-DULUTH	13,285	38.9
CHICAGO-VALPARAISO	17,594	(2.9)
CHICAGO-INDIANAPOLIS	8,212	.0
CHICAGO-PEORIA	3,078	9.5
CHICAGO-KANSAS CITY	12,785	47.9
PHILADELPHIA-PITTSBURGH	10,932	31.8
PORTLAND-EUGENE	3,504	(53.7)
CHICAGO-MINNEAPOLIS	6,219	(9.7)
TOTAL SHORT DISTANCE	502,718	(2.3)
WASHINGTON-MONTREAL	18,731	(14.4)
NEW YORK-FLORIDA	75,357	(1.3)
CHICAGO-NEW YORK/WASHINGTON	30,557	(17.0)
CHICAGO-CINCINNATI-WASHINGTON	21,341	.3
CHICAGO-SEATTLE (N)	44,254	(1.5)
CHICAGO-SAN FRANCISCO	40,380	(3.6)
CHICAGO-LOS ANGELES	40,239	2.5
CHICAGO-NEW ORLEANS	23,009	(14.7)
CHICAGO-TEXAS	23,509	15.3
LOS ANGELES-NEW ORLEANS	11,658	19.6
LOS ANGELES-SEATTLE	65,224	4.3
CHICAGO-NEW YORK/BOSTON	39,205	(10.2)
BOSTON-NEWPORT NEWS	8,033	(35.2)
NEW YORK-SAVANNAH	19,273	(31.8)
SEATTLE-SALT LAKE CTY/CHI	23,325	31.5
NEW YORK-NEW ORLEANS	31,793	7.7
LOS ANGELES/OGDEN-CHI	16,300	(8.2)
TOTAL LONG DISTANCE	532,188	(3.5)
SYSTEM TOTAL	1,882,149	(13.8)

Here are the latest ridership figures from Amtrak, for the month of August 1981. (The July figures appeared in RTN 232.)

August ridership continued the pattern of weakness seen in this recession year, and in fact slumped more heavily than in the first two summer months (systemwide ridership was down 3.6 and 5.8 per cent in June and July respectively). August ridership systemwide was down 13.8% from Aug of 1980, with most of the weakness again found in the NE Corridor, where patronage was 24.1% lower than in 1980.

There were no special trains operated in August.

A correspondent did some interesting calculations using these data, estimating Amtrak's revenue passenger miles (RPMs) for August, using the actual average trip lengths for fiscal year 1980 (which were 103 miles for NE Corridor and 575 miles for long distance routes). He finds that in August 18.9% of Amtrak's RPMs were generated in the Corridor, 14.8% on short distance routes, and 66.3% on long distance lines.

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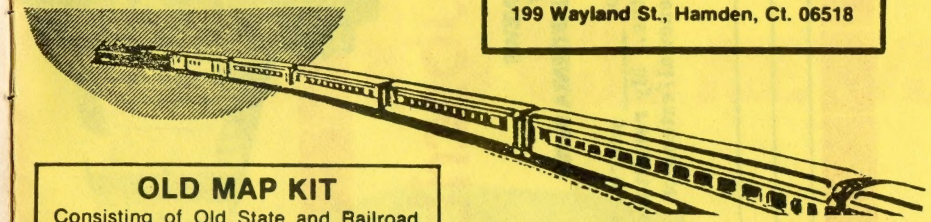

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